

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-13-03

August 29, 2003

The following is offered in response to your August 21, 2003 letter to me in which you seek a formal interpretation of the provisions of Section 309.2 of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code portion of the 1999 State Building Code.

Question: In attempting to comply with the requirements of Section 309.2 of the 1995 CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code portion of the 1999 State Building Code for garages attached side by side to a residence, a builder applied one layer of 5/8 type X gypsum board to the underside of the garage ceiling joists rather than to the garage side of the wall separating the garage from the house and its attic. Although there are no habitable rooms above the garage, is the builder required to cover the garage walls and all combustible supports within the garage to achieve the required separation?

Answer: Yes. Although the garage walls and other combustible supports in the garage would not have been required to be covered with 5/8 inch type X gypsum board if the entire wall separating the garage from the house and its attic had been covered, the election to utilize the garage ceiling as the separating membrane requires that all structural elements supporting that membrane be similarly protected. The intent of the code is that the protective membrane remain in place in the event of a fire in the garage. If the walls and combustible supports (headers, beams, posts, etc.) are not protected in a manner at least equivalent to the ceiling protective membrane, there is no assurance that the ceiling protective membrane will remain in place to provide the protection required by the code.